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ABSTRACT

Teacher preparation programs that separate reflection from action encourage teachers to facilitate school norms and thus help schools function to reproduce social inequalities, while programs that link reflection and action encourage teachers to adopt a more critical role and thus help schools function to transform social inequalities. "Reflection" involves clarifying one's assumptions, assessing consequences, and judging results against moral or ethical criteria. "Action" includes accomplishment of both mental and physical tasks. Teacher preparation programs like competency-based teacher education or field-based training give teachers skills but ignore implicit values, thereby encouraging action but not reflection (that is, "activism"). However, programs without field experience encourage reflection but not action ("verbalism"). A middle-school teacher certification program at the University of Utah attempts to link reflection with action. Students each do an ethnography of a school and prepare papers on their educational philosophy and background. They then practice as teaching aids and write reflective papers on the experience. Their final course involves student teaching, but with seminars and supervision that link reflection and action. Results of the program indicate that students understand both the "hidden curriculum" of schools and, to varying degrees, the limitations on change in the classroom. (Author/RW)

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Reflection and Action in Teacher Education Programs

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Reflection and Action in Teacher Education Programs

One factor which influences the roles teachers adopt in the school is how they are trained. Popkewitz (1979) states that:

> Teacher education imposes work styles and patterns of communication which guide individuals as to how they are to reason and to act in their relationship to the setting of schooling. The language, material organization and social interaction of teacher education programs establish principles of authority, power and rationality for guiding occupational conduct. [p.16]

Recent educational theorists, such as Anyon (1981), Apple (1979), and Willis (1977), although helpful in clarifying schools' complex role in reproducing societal inequalities, have deemphasized how such factors as teacher training have contributed to schools' impact on society. Instead they make the general argument that societal priorities have encouraged teachers to act as facilitators of social inequalities. This leaves the reader with little understanding of <u>why</u> teachers adopt particular roles in the schools. In an attempt to understand the roles teacher play in schools, I will argue two major points about the <u>form</u> of teacher preparation programs: (1) teacher preparation programs that separate reflection and action will encourage teacher to facilitate school norms and serve a reproductive function: (2) teacher preparation programs that link reflection

and action encourage teachers to adopt a more critical role and have the potential to serve a transformative function.[1] In arguing these points, the first part of the paper will clarify the terms reflection and action. The next section will elaborate on some possible outcomes of having a teacher preparation program that separates or links reflection and action. The third part of the paper will describe how the linkage between reflection and action can be incorporated in a teacher preparation program, and the final section will analyze some tentative results of a program that uses this form.

Reflection and Action: Clarifying Terms

Reflection is generally thought of as a process of "stepping back" or pondering a situation in an attempt to better understand that situation. Reflection, according to Van Mannen (1977), can occur in three stages. In the first stage, reflection is based on what is considered most efficient or effective. For example, a teacher might reflect on the most efficient way to group students given the need to accomplish a particular objective.

A second level of reflectivity attempts to clarify assumptions underlying practice and assessing the consequences. A teacher reflecting at this level would not assume, for example, that the form of the curriculum makes no difference and would try to clarify underlying assumptions and assess the implications of using this form.

The final or third stage of reflectivity as conceptualized by Van Mannen indicates that one not only clarifies underlying assumptions, but also uses moral and ethical criteria in determining how this will affect

practice. For example, a teacher would use a certain practice in the classroom because after analyzing the underlying assumptions, the resulting consequences reflect a certain notion of justice or equality. In essence, this level of reflectivity links classroom practice to wider social, economic and political conditions.

When the term reflectivity is used in this paper it will refer to Van Mannen's stages 2 or 3. Therefore, considering how to efficiently facilitate a predetermined objective would not indicate reflection for our purposes. Conversely, reflectivity would include situations where the participant acted at a stage two level, i.e., did not explicitly consider moral and political criteria in clarifying or assessing the consequences of practice.

Action is normally associated with the physical ability to accomplish a task. However, in this paper action will not be limited to physical acts. Action can also be indicated by a change in personal perspective or opinion that includes an understanding of the social setting and ways to influence that setting. In such a situation, although the individual may not physically act, he/she would gain a new perspective which can direct action in the future. An example may clarify this point. A prospective teacher discovers through observation that controlling students by a very stringent method in the classroom only pushes the discipline problems "into the streets." This understanding causes a change in perception about classroom management. Yet the prospective teacher cannot physically act because he/she will only have the opportunity to observe practice during this part of the preparation program. Consequently, the action occurs in the form of a change in perspective and this transformation can begin to be actualized when a teaching opportunity occurs.

It is also possible that at a particular time physical action is thought to be inappropriate. In this instance, the decision not to act does not mean no action, but rather critical reflection. Critical reflection incorporates a form of actior in that the act is to delay an action at a particular time.

The Forms of Teacher Preparation Programs: Possible Outcomes

As mentioned previously, current educational theorists (Anyon, 1981; Apple, 1979; and Willis, 1977) have made the case that schools, although not determined by societal priorities, primarily help reproduce the inequalities in our society. If their arguments are to be taken seriously, it is quite important that our teacher preparation programs are structured to encourage teachers to act in ways that can confront schools' impact on society. To confront schools' impact on society, teachers must be prepared to act as more than facilitators of educational priorities, and also to consider the validity of those priorities and ways to change priorities where it is thought to be appropriate.

Teacher education programs which separate reflection and action increase the likelihood that teachers will act to facilitate the current impact of schooling. On reason for this effect is that if teachers are trained to act without reflection (activism)[2], this perspective will discourage them from considering the direction of the educational process. Only by reflecting (as defined by this paper) does one consider the implications of what is taught in the classroom. Conversely, teachers will be encouraged to view their role in terms of how to efficiently get to the implicit and explicit goals of schooling. This technical emphasis can only help facilitate the current impact of schools. Examining aspects of teacher preparation programs that separate reflection and action may clarify these points.

One major trend in teacher preparation programs today has been the competency-based teacher education (CBTE) program (Sanderfur, 1978). Although praised for its ability to make teachers accountable, these programs many times promote the development of specific teaching skills apart from the ends to which these skills are to be addressed. Teachers develop skills while "experts" reflect on the competencies teachers should master (Tom, 1977). The emphasis on action or performance encourages teachers to view their role in terms of mastering skills which will give them the ability to actualize the "understood" goals of schooling. Teachers are trained to take an activism perspective which ignores implicit values embedded in the direction of the educational process.

After teachers have mastered the requisite skills in CBTE and other teacher education programs, they are commonly placed in a field-based experience. Although most field-based experiences include some form of supervision, and even occasionally a university seminar, these experiences many times fall short of promoting reflection. There are several reasons for this impact. First, supervision often does not help student teachers "step back" from practice but rather suggests "desired" changes for practice. Surely, supervision in a competency-based program would have changes in performance, not reflectivity, as a primary goal. Secondly, student teaching seminars many times do not meet often enough or are not geared to specifically help student teachers reflect on their practice. Given the "survival orientation" of most student teaching experiences and the lack of reflection encouraged by supervisory practices and university seminars, it is not surprising that these experiences, as commonly structured, do not encourage teachers to consider the implications of what is taught in the schools.

The impact of these programs is therefore to prepare teachers to facilitate school reality as opposed to critically analyzing it.

A second way teacher preparation programs can separate reflection and action is by not giving prospective teachers an opportunity to act. In this situation, teachers may be encouraged to reflect but not have the opportunity to act on those reflections (a verbalism perspective).[3] Because adopting a transformative role requires an understanding of the present impact of schooling and a knowledge of how to actualize desired changes, a verbalism perspective does not prepare teachers to play a transformative role in the schools. For example, it is not unusual for prospective teachers to bemoan the authoritarian nature of some teaching practices. They may also reflect on alternative ways to approach classroom management. Yet if these prospective teachers are not given an opportunity to observe or practice in the school classroom (concurrently with their reflections) they will not understand the specific way school reality is constructed or what sorts of actions might be effective in making desired changes. Consequently, when they undertake their full-time student teaching, they have not been prepared to actualize their reflections. The resulting frustration many times results in an abandonment of transformative actions and a resignation to a more facilitative role.[4]

If the separation of reflection and action in teacher preparation programs does not prepare teachers to act in transformative ways and encourages a facilitative role, then the use of this form begins to explain why teachers seem to (for the most part) quietly acquiesce to the schools' influence in reproducing society relations. A teacher preparation program which links reflection and action surely will not eliminate teachers from adopting a

facilitative role. What it can do is provide experiences which are prerequisites for teachers who want to include in their role the ability to transform school reality.

One type of experience mentioned previously that is essential for teachers who want to transform school reality is an analysis of why schools have a particular impact. This type of analysis exposes the limitations found within the school context which will have to be confronted if the teachers are to change the reality of schooling and its impact on societal relations. A teacher taking an activism perspective is unlikely to analyze school reality because his/her primary emphasis is to determine efficient ways to get to predetermined ends. A teacher adopting a verbalism perspective could reflect on this question, but would not clarify how aspects of the school structure might limit a particular action. Only by linking reflection and action can one consider the question of how school reality is formed and understand the specific limitations which teachers must confront to have an impact on the reality of schooling.

To adopt a transformative role in the school, teachers must also reflect on ways to confront limitations found in the school. In other words, it is not enough just to understand factors which will limit change, a teacher must also have a variety of possible actions which can affect the particular construction of reality and its impact on societal relations. An activism perspective deals with ways to accomplish goals, but only in terms of efficiency. As a result, an activism perspective would not consider alternative ways to confront limitations affecting change in educational goals. A verbalism perspective is not concerned with particular problematic

situations which arise in reality and, therefore, does not consider possible courses of action. Linking reflection and action can expose school factors which will limit change in educational goals and suggest ways to confront these situations based on a "testing" (either through observation or physical action) of school reality.

A final type of experience which is a prerequisite for teachers who want to adopt a transformative role is the development of a philosophy about what school reality should be like. Transformation as used in this paper refers to a change away from established norms which tend to reproduce societal relations to a more equitable situation. To encourage this type of change one must develop a philosophy or vision of what schools should be like. An activism perspective would not provide this type of experience because it is not concerned with questions of what is taught. A verbalism perspective could help one develop an educational philosophy. But this philosophy would not be based on a knowledge of school reality. Without the referent point, it is impossible to determine how one's "vision" relates to the present school reality. Consequently, only by linking reflection and action (action could involve observation) can a philosophy of education be developed which attempts to transform the influence of schools.

Incorporating a Linkage of Reflection and Action in a Teacher Preparation Program

The middle school program at the University of Utah provides an example of a teacher preparation program that attempts to link reflection and action. Before dealing directly with how reflection and action are linked in this program, some background information may be beneficial.

The need for a middle school teacher certification program at the University of Utah occurred primarily because of an expanding population

in the state of Utah. To cope with the expected increase in student population, the state converted many junior highs to middle schools and built new middle schools. These new schools in turn required teachers with unique expertise. Consequently, a Utah state mandate required all middle school teachers to have a middle school certification by the year 1983. Given the need for a middle school certification program, the faculty at the University of Utah spent one year laying out the structure of such a program. These initial guidelines recommended that approximately 20 students go through three sequential courses specifically pertaining to the middle school teaching certificate.[5] The first and second courses would be six credits each with the final course (student teaching) a ten-credit course. No new student would be accepted in the middle or later parts of the program. This program structure made it likely that a fairly stable cohort group would be established for three quarters of the academic year. The first cohort group was started in the 1980-1981 academic year.

Course Number One (Curriculum and Instruction)

In preparation for this course it was decided by the instructors that the content would emphasize an understanding of the school process and its relationship to society. Given this content a structure was proposed which would help prospective teachers reflect and link these reflections to action.

One primary way to accomplish this linkage was to have students in the program (for a major part of the first course) produce ethnographies.[6] To produce an ethnography one must observe a social setting, develop hypotheses about that setting and "test" those hypotheses within the social setting. This type of experience encourages a linkage of reflection and action in the sense that any personal transformation that does occur will not separate the

ability to know with possible ways to act upon that knowledge. This linkage was illustrated in a university student's ethnography on how the goal management system used in the school affected teachers' work. She hypothesized that this system would greatly affect what areas of interest teachers focused on. She "tested" this hypothesis by observing practice in the school and interviewing teachers. One finding of the study was that if teachers had a strong desire to incorporate their own goals, this could be accomplished within the limits of the management system.

The information gained by doing this ethnography enabled the prospective teacher to reflect, base those reflections on an understanding of school reality and determine possible ways to act if one wanted to resist the limits inherent in the goal management system used at the school. This university student had been given an opportunity to link reflection and action.

To enable university students to produce ethnographies about half of the first course was spent observing in the schools. The initial observations were used to help students decide on a topic they wanted to research. No restrictions were put on these topics as long as they weren't solely interested in determining "how to" questions and reflected on practice. Students could work in groups or as individuals. Once the topics were decided, the students had most of the remaining part of the quarter to test their "reflections."

Occurring concurrently with these observational experiences, students in the university classroom were given instruction on methods and problems of observation, examples of ethnographies and "dilemmas" in writing and interpreting observations. In addition to the information on ethnographies, the university classroom was used as a forum for students and instructors to dialogue about their reflections and observations of practice. This experiential information was supplemented with readings which provided

various perspectives on the issues students were reflecting on. To complete this dialogical process, the final session (a rather extended class) was made up of a sharing of the results and hypotheses found in the ethnographies. In this sharing process students were able to contribute to the group's understanding of the school reality and possible ways to act on that reality. By having students do ethnographies they were able to link reflection and action, understand ways to act as more than technical facilitators and help influence the dimensions of the school experience.

In addition to producing ethnographies, prospective teachers were asked to write a paper on their philosophy of education and an autobiography of their educational background. This would help encourage stage 3 reflection. As was stated earlier, in order for a teacher to act as a transformer of school reality that person must have a philosophy about what schooling should be like. The philosophy paper was a first step in bringing to a conscious level what these prospective teachers want the educational experience to be. The autobiography also helped develop a philosophical position on educational issues by pointing out how past events have influenced the way teachers think about education today. These reflections on what schooling should be like were then linked to action through the ethnographic studies.

Course Number Two (Curriculum and Instruction)

During the second quarter of the middle school teacher preparation program, the focus shifted from the general notion of schooling to its more specific components: the student, curriculum and the teacher. As was true of the first course, in an attempt to avoid the verbalism or activism "traps" a structure was initiated which linked reflection and action. The

prospective teachers in the program were able to act by being assigned to a team of practicing teachers and participating as an aide or assistant. This action component was not unstructured, but rather was used to "test" notions about the student, curriculum, and teacher that were discussed in the university class, thereby providing a potential linkage of reflection and action. To urge prospective teachers to utilize this structure they were asked to write a reflective paper on each aspect of the educational process discussed at the university. For example, various ways to think about and approach classroom management might be discussed at the university. The prospective teachers would also be practicing classroom management. These two sets of information would be combined to form the content of the reflective paper. Typically, the first part of this paper would start with a hypothesis about the aspect of schooling covered in the university classroom. The second part of the paper would describe how the assisting teacher acted in terms of this aspect of the school process. The final part of the paper would analyze the description in terms of theory presented at the university as well as suggest possible alternative ways to "act" in the future. These papers were then shared to promote dialogue in the university classroom. An excerpt from a dialogue dealing with the role of the teacher indicates how prospective teachers began to link reflection and action. (Hager, 1981)

> C is concerned that students' expectations may be different from our own. Worried that school may really be a battlefield where all of our humanistic notions are inappropriate. E thinks if we buckle to these expectations we're just playing the game. A warns us not to set up a battlefield situation, yet F says we have to realize that being a teacher <u>is</u> a controlling situation. . . .

> (Personal note) From my experience in the school last Thursday, when I did my first teaching, I think I'm going to go through a period of frustration and being very critical of myself. I planned what seemed to be a reasonable lesson, yet when it was over (a question and answer session on one article they had read), I sat down and thought, "that was stupid," I felt I could have done more with the kids. But the classroom seems to have a consciousness all its own. You stand up in front of all those kids and act like a "teacher" in spite of yourself. Calling on the kids whose hands are waving. Acting, not being. It's so easy. I very much want to be a person to them in the sense that I am "real", not on stage.

This dialogue shows that students were becoming aware of how a specific school context can influence their roles as well as what they would like their roles to be. A structure that incorporates a linkage between reflection and action precipitates these sorts of insights.

By giving prospective teachers a chance to reflect and act, and linking those experiences through dialogue and reflective papers, the structure of the second course allowed (1) reflections to be "tested" out within the school setting and (2) gave prospective teachers experience in developing ways to influence the reality of the school.

One potential problem of this structure is that by presenting educational topics as a set of separate entities, this emphasis would contradict the holistic analysis developed in the first course. To alleviate this potential problem the final assignment of the quarter was to combine all the various aspect of schooling discussed into a unit plan. More specifically, where particular aspects of the educational process had been dealt with individually, the unit plan enabled prospective teachers to analyze these as an integrated whole. The unit plan would be taught in the classroom and also reflected on in the form of a paper. These reflections were than shared in the university class. The unit plan experience not only helped link reflection and action, but also allowed student to reflect on and "test" how the

various aspects of the schooling process "fit" together as a whole.

Student Teaching

The final segment of the middle school teacher certification program was the student teaching experience. This experience created in some ways a most difficult problem in terms of linking reflection and action. Student teaching is for the most part a very intense and trying experience. The tendency of many students is to find a way to "survive." But a student teacher involved in "survival" is unlikely to put a lot of effort into reflecting on practice. Put differently, the demands of the student teaching experience make it more likely that student teachers take an activism perspective. Given this emphasis, how can a student teaching experience be structured to encourage a linkage of reflection and action?

Two ways were used to try to link reflection and action in the student teaching experience: (1) a student teaching seminar; (2) the use of a supervisory model (horizontal evaluation) (Gitlin, 1981) that is based on developing a reflective approach to teaching.

The student teaching seminar had the potential to link reflection and action by creating a forum where students could dialogue about their practice in a reflective way. This dialogue would include such topics as problems occurring in the classroom, structural limitations, and the sharing of ideas that would help combat those structural limitations. Although these reflections could then be used to influence practice, several factors influenced the probability of this outcome. Positively, the university students had been studying and learning together for an academic year. This familiarity encouraged trust, empathy and openness among the students. All these traits greatly enhanced the quality and frankness of the dialogues that occurred in

the student teaching seminar and made a linkage of reflection and action more likely. Conversely, because the seminar only occurred once every other week, university students put most of their energies into their everyday practical concerns and only occasionally were urged to link seminar reflections with future practice. Consequently, the student teaching seminar surely did not guarantee that reflection would be linked to action. To supplement the student teaching seminar, a supervision model, horizontal evaluation, was used to more directly link reflection and action.

One key aspect of the horizontal evaluation model is that before the supervisor observes the lesson, the student teacher is asked to write out his/her intents for the lesson. This encourages the student teacher to reflect on what he/she wants to do. During the lesson that the supervisor observes, the student teacher tries to actualize his/her reflected goals in practice. The supervisor by observing practice can determine with a fair degree of accuracy how well the practice matches the student teacher's goals or intents. The clarification of the relationship between intent and practice forms the dialogue for the supervisory conference. This dialogue can focus on the reality of the classroom, what the student teacher would like it to be, the limit-situations that may constrain the student teacher from achieving his/her goals and the possible ways to actualize unachieved goals. This type of dialogue not only helps student teachers reflect on their philosophy, but also see the relationship between philosophy and practice.

One situation that discourages students from reflecting on the relationship between philosophy and practice is when the student teacher's intent matches practice. In this case, educational philosophy might not be questioned and what is will be assumed to be what should be. To alleviate this

potential problem, horizontal evaluation uses a number of techniques to help a student teacher question his/her intents even if they are actualized in practice. One technique is the use of a "dilemma."

The supervisor can create a "dilemma" by posing an alternative intent and rationale to the one suggested by the student teacher. For example, let us say that a student teacher states that his/her long-term intent is to get through all the major points presented in a social studies text or unit. The supervisor, feeling that the text or unit portrays blacks and women in a negative way, might pose a "dilemma" for the student by suggesting a rationale for an alternative intent. This intent might abandon getting through the material and concentrate on unearthing the bias implicit in the text or unit. This "dilemma" would help the student analyze the bias in the text, his/her reactions to the bias and the political obligations of a future teacher. Ultimately, the student teacher must decide whether or not the original intent should be modified to guide practice. The purpose of this strategy is not to force the student teacher to accept the conflicting intent, but rather to help the student rethink, defend and understand how the philosophical, ethical and political implications embedded in a particular intent relate to his/her practice. (Stage 3 reflection)

The use of both the student teaching seminar and horizontal evaluation increased the likelihood of linking reflection and action in the student teaching experience.

Implications of Linking Reflection and Action in the Middle School Teacher Preparation Program at the University of Utah

In reviewing the middle school teacher certification program, one significant impact seems to be that prospective teachers understood the limitations

for change that existed in the school classroom. Many students in the program were aware of the problems resulting from a predetermined set of objectives, of trying to guide a classroom without controlling out all spontaneous behavior, of the limitations of working in a team and even the constraints of having 30 students in a classroom. Yet only being aware of these limitations does not suggest that these prospective teachers were acting in a transformative way. One can understand limitations and either see no way to change them or not desire to change them. The students in the teacher preparation program at the University of Utah differed greatly in how they used their knowledge of these limitations. Some students understood the limitations and knew of possibilities for change but decided (unconsciously or consciously) to accept many of those limitations. Others understood the limitations and knew of possibilities for change but were very discouraged when they couldn't actualize immediately (during the ten-week student teaching experience) these possibilities. A third group of students had a knowledge of limitations and possibilities for change, and seemed to act on this knowledge. What these differing reactions suggest is that although students were given experiences which increased their understanding of school reality and ways to act on that reality, in practice they varied in their desire to incorporate this knowledge into their teaching.

Another significant impact of the program was that prospective teachers often reflected on what the school experience should be and based those reflections on an understanding of present day school reality. Students seemed to be aware of the "hidden curriculum," the impact of their teaching on societal relations (e.g., racial and sexual equality and economic opportunity) and the importance of questioning what should happen in the classroom.

For example, one prospective teacher in the program used ethnographic methodology to analyze the implicit and explicit educational goals of a particular school. She hypothesized that one hidden goal of the school was to train students to score high on national tests, while the overt goal was to promote democratic principles and citizenship. This hypothesis was tested through observations at the school. Another prospective teacher did an ethnography on how a goal management system (GEMS) affected what teachers did at the level of practice. Other ethnographies looked at the notion of a "good teacher," hierarchies of status within a school building and the impact of guidance programs on the school. One commonality in all these papers was that educational issues were viewed from an holistic view and educational philosophies were developed in relation to the actual conditions found in the school setting.

In summary, the middle school program at the University of Utah by linking reflection and action did not change the role of prospective teachers from facilitators to transformers of school reality. What it did do was provide experiential opportunities which encouraged teachers to expand their role to include a transformative potential. Although teacher education programs are only one influence in trying to explain why teachers act in particular ways in the school, it is clear that programs which have a form that separates reflection and action will not prepare teachers to act as transformers of school reality. Conversely, teacher preparation programs that do link reflection and action provide some of the preparatory experiences needed to adopt a transformative role in the schools.

Footnotes

[1]Transformative function refers to the change away from established norms which tend to reproduce societal relations to a more equitable situation.

[2]This definition comes primarily from Pablo Fierre's work entitled Pedagogy of the Oppressed, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York. Seabury Press, 1973, c1970).

[3]Ibid. p. 75.

[4]For a description of this sort of effect, see Robert Tabachnick, "Intern-Teacher Roles: Illusions, Disillusions and Reality," a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of AERA, New York, April, 1977.

[5]Other courses in specialty areas such as reading and educational psychology were also required for the middle school certificate.

[6]An ethnography is the study of a culture in its native context.

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